

# Erie Times-News

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## YOUR VIEW

Letters to the Editor

### Take a walk in the wild

Outdoors columnist Mike Bleech's good recognition of the value of wilderness, and of the outstanding work of Friends of Allegheny Wilderness, was welcome reading, but I'd quibble with one sentence ("National Wilderness Month deserves consideration," Erie Times-News, Sept. 15).

I grew up in North East, moved to Colorado, but remain strongly connected to Erie County and western Pennsylvania's forests. I'm a wilderness volunteer out here, and serve on the board of the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance, which has helped me see the range of American wilderness.

"There is nowhere in the Allegheny National Forest that can be called wilderness, such as the term has been used elsewhere," Bleech wrote. Here's one elsewhere: Earlier this month, I spent three days walking 20-some miles through a small corner of the 75,068-acre Rawah Wilderness. Our work crew camped just below 11,000 feet, looking up at sheer walls with snow still in the crevices. Wall-calendar wilderness, right?

We humans have left our mark on the Rawah (logging, ranching) as on the Allegheny, but they both retain something that is at the heart of the Wilderness Act: "outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation." They are both places, where, paraphrasing Bleech, the moment we walk into them, things change in us. We come closer to something very big, very important. The Allegheny shares these qualities with the Rawah.

Leaves will be turning soon. Go for a walk in the Allegheny, feel what it does for you. That will tell you: "This is wilderness. We need to protect it."

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